

THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR

# ALL THE YEAR ROUND

A Weekly Journal

CONDUCTED BY

CHARLES DICKENS

WITH WHICH IS INCORPORATED

"HOUSEHOLD WORDS"

No. 358. NEW SERIES.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 9, 1875.

PRICE TWOPENCE.

## HALVES.

BY JAMES PAYN,

AUTHOR OF "LOST SIR MASSINGBERD," "A PERFECT TREASURE," "AT HER MERCY," &c. &c.

### CHAPTER XXI. THE "DUMMY" DEEDS.

I WAS a strong and skilful swimmer, but to make way through water with one's clothes on is a difficult matter for unaccustomed limbs, and I made but very slow progress. I soon began to feel numb and cold, and presently every stroke became such a labour, that it seemed each one must be my last. If I had had only myself to save, I verily believe I should have given up the struggle and sunk; but the thought that my darling's life depended on my exertions spurred me on. If my limbs were numb, what must hers have been, to whom all movement was denied? To die would be to doom her to a death ten times more lingering and terrible than mine, and, therefore, I must needs live.

At last I reached the boat-house, and dragged myself up the steps; then wasted perforce some precious minutes in gaining breath and strength, before I took the file. A few strokes, however, separated the slender chain, and I was in the skiff and labouring—oh, how slowly!—at the sculls, in less time than I could have believed possible. Like one who comes from death to life after a wasting fever, I was weak, yet gathered strength with every breath I drew. I could see my darling's head above the waters yet, and made for her as straight as my dizzy brain would permit me.

"I am safe, Harry; I am safe!" she cried, as I drew near, knowing those words would nerve me better far than any cordial; but I dared not lose breath in answering her.

I reached her somehow, and with infinite difficulty contrived to get her into the frail boat, as cold, and white, and damp as death itself—or I. And yet, now that the worst was over, I could scarcely wish that the catastrophe had not occurred. We had risked death together, and ere we reached the shore I had won her promise that she would be mine for life; a recompense that paid for all.

Notwithstanding so severe an ordeal, Gertrude's constitution did not seem to take harm from this mishap, which showed, despite her recent indisposition, that it was naturally strong. I think, indeed, my aunt suffered more from the relation of our adventure, than we did ourselves from the experience of it. She shuddered, and shivered, and jingled her rings at the recital of our woes in a manner piteous to witness; nor would she permit Gertrude again to tempt the dangers of the lake until a life-belt of the latest construction had been sent for from town, without which she gave a solemn promise never to enter the skiff.

What had become of the key of the skiff we could not discover, and should probably have set it down among those mysterious disappearances of inanimate objects which occur in the best-regulated establishments, and the nature of which seems more worthy of investigation than many other matters which at present engage philosophic inquiry; but what made it look suspiciously like malicious design was the fact of a plug having been removed from the punt at the same time, the absence of which had caused our calamity. If it was a practical joke, it had very nearly been a fatal one; yet such it probably was; for though Stanbrook, as I have said, invited no tourist visitors, one or two knapsack-carrying sons of commerce

in the shape of pedlars occasionally visited it, and one of these had called at the Rectory on the day in question and been dismissed without a deal. To this failure in commercial enterprise the sorry trick that had been played us was doubtless owing. The rector did not say much, but the activity with which he scoured the country for the next three days on his cob, armed with an enormous horsewhip, showed the direction in which his thoughts were tending. However, fortunately, as it turned out, for all parties, his quest was not successful.

About this time there arrived for my uncle—what was a very rare event with him indeed—a business letter. He hated business, and—perhaps because he was totally unfitted for such matters—despised it. He used to term it “that cumbersome and pretentious machinery for the transaction of affairs called Business;” and every communication on that theme, which arrived in the Rectory letter-bag, was at once relegated to Mark Raeburn.

But Mark was far away with his sick brother at the seaside, and this matter was urgent. It referred to the expiry of the lease of certain contiguous houses in a London street in which my uncle had invested a large portion of his property, and which the writer was anxious to purchase, en bloc, for the establishment of some emporium.

“Dence take the fellow, how should I know when the lease expires?” asked my uncle comically, as though he were the last person in the world to be expected to know it. “The matter is your concern, Harry, as much as mine, for the money will be yours one day, so it is but just that you should take the trouble off my shoulders. Take the cob and ride over to the Priory to-day, and look at the lease. John Raeburn will give you a sight of it—he has the counterpart, of course—and then we needn’t trouble Mark at all.”

So off I went to Kirkdale, after an absence that had now extended to some weeks, nor had I any intention, even yet, of returning thither for good. As John was all alone, my uncle bade me bring him back with me for a day or two, if he could be spared from the office.

“Well, John, I am come to fetch you over to Stanbrook,” were my first words on meeting him, and I thought they would have lighted his face with pleasure, for he had no more real liking for legal pursuits than I had myself, and always welcomed a holiday. But, to my surprise, he shook his

head with all the gravity of Lord Burleigh, and pronounced the thing to be quite impossible.

“I am in sole charge here, you see, Sheddon, with only the clerks to help me, and I dare not leave the office.”

I did not feel bound to press the matter. It was likely enough that he had a good deal to do; indeed, my lively friend seemed to have already grown older by some years under the burden of his unaccustomed responsibilities; and, moreover, the proverb that “Two is company but three is none” had great weight with me just then, and I had no personal desire to import a companion for Gertrude and myself to Stanbrook.

“Well, John, and what is the news?”

“My father is made mayor of Kirkdale,” answered he, “and may wear a scarlet gown if he pleases. It is a great dignity, but his grey mare will be the better horse for all that.”

“I don’t doubt it,” returned I drily. “But what is the news of your Uncle Alec?”

“The accounts of him are certainly better; but he does not seem to like thesea,” answered John in a strange mechanical way, “and I should not be surprised if we had him back again here within the fortnight.”

“I am afraid it does not much matter where he goes, so far as his health is concerned,” said I. “It seemed to me, when he left the Rectory, that it was merely a question of a few weeks, more or less, of life.”

“Well, the doctor at Sandibeach,” replied John, in the same unwonted tone, “seems to think better of him than Wilde did; and, at all events, gives the poor old fellow a longer lease.”

I shook my head incredulously, and the mention of the word “lease” suggesting my errand, I at once went on to that, and explained its nature.

“Your uncle’s lease will be in the box in the office, along with his other papers, no doubt,” said John, at once adopting his old cheery manners, “but I am afraid the governor has taken the keys with him.”

This we found to be the case; but, nevertheless, on searching the house for them, we came upon other keys, one of which fitted the padlock that fastened the box, and so I got it open. It was pretty full of papers, and, on turning them over to find the lease, I came upon certain securities the signature to one of which suddenly riveted my attention.

“Hullo, what have you got there?”

cried John, perceiving my astonishment ; "you mustn't be reading anything but the lease, you know."

He got up, rather excitedly, from his high stool, and came towards me, as though he would have shut the box.

"Excuse me, John," said I, "but what I have got here demands some explanation. Do you see this signature that purports to be my uncle's?"

"Of course I do. 'Purports?' Why, of course it is your uncle's; whose else would you have it to be?"

"No one else's, of course. I would have it to be his own. But this is a forgery—not his own writing—John."

"A what?" cried he, turning very red. "You must not talk like that, Sheddon. If there was a clerk in this room I would prosecute you for libel. It is a devilish serious thing, you know."

"It is, John," interrupted I gravely; "so serious that I think I ought to carry this deed back to Stanbrook with me. I will take my oath that my uncle Hastings never wrote his own name here."

Here John burst into such a fit of laughter as I had never heard him indulge in before; he sent forth peal after peal, and held his sides as actors do upon the stage, while the tears absolutely rolled down his cheeks.

"Why, you stupid old fellow," gasped he, "is it possible that you are not aware that all the papers in these tin boxes are 'dummies?' Do you imagine that my father would suffer the securities of his clients to lie about on these shelves, to be got at by any common key, such as you have picked out of an old drawer? Suppose there was a fire—what would become of them all then? Really, my dear Sheddon, if you are so very simple as all that, I am afraid we shall never make a lawyer of you. These are merely dummies, my good fellow, which are kept here for reference—the real deeds are not to be got at quite so easily. They are in fire-proof boxes in the bank cellars."

"But the lease here," argued I, "is properly signed. I can swear to my uncle's handwriting in this case; whereas, in the other, it is only a clumsy imitation."

"That is all as it should be, my good fellow; the lease is not a dummy, but a duplicate. Really, Sheddon, if you were not the good fellow I know you to be, such doubts as you have expressed would have annoyed me excessively. You may take the whole box away with you, so far

as I care; but it is my advice to you, upon all accounts, not to do so, and especially not to repeat your injurious remarks, either here or elsewhere."

"My dear John," replied I, a little ashamed of my intemperate language, though by no means convinced that it was only excusable on the ground of my ignorance, "I am really very sorry; but I always thought that these boxes held the actual deeds, and even seem to recollect you or your father having told me so."

"Your memory must have played you false, then," answered John, with stiffness. "Please to make a note of what is required as respects the lease, and then let me have the key again. I was wrong to permit the box to be opened without my father's leave."

I took the note, then gave him back the key. "I am very sorry for what has happened," said I, frankly, "and for whatever I may have said under a misconception."

"That is quite sufficient, my dear Sheddon. Of course it galled me that you should think it possible that there was anything wrong with your uncle's securities. I almost think I ought to tell my father, in order that he may explain the matter to Mr. Hastings."

"Well," said I, "if you wouldn't mind, John, I think that would be the most satisfactory course." I could see that my thus taking him at his word surprised and annoyed him immensely; but I had no intention of retracting.

His own explanation would, doubtless, have satisfied me had the matter concerned myself alone; but I felt that it was only right that my uncle should be informed of what still struck me as—to say the least of it—a peculiarity in the mode of dealing with business documents. John made no further remark upon the matter, and we parted on good terms; but I could see by his grave and serious air, which was with him a sign of extreme mental disturbance, that his sensibilities were deeply touched. Though by no means devotedly attached to his mother, he had an honest affection for his father, I believe, and naturally resented any seeming imputation upon his good faith, for which I did not blame him. Nevertheless, the matter seemed graver to me the more I thought of it; and after dinner, that evening, I did not fail to tell my uncle all that had occurred.

He allowed that the thing looked "very odd;" he had never heard of "dummy"



parchments, though it did not surprise him that such a system—which must necessarily double the price of “law” to the general public—should be in full swing. It was better, he agreed, that Mark should write and explain the matter.

In a few days the attorney did so, and his explanation was, in effect, what his son had already told me. The rector’s genuine securities reposed, he said, along with those of his (the attorney’s) other clients in the safe of the Kirkdale Bank. “And if you have the least doubt, my dear Hastings—I do not say of the probity of your old friend and neighbour, but of the fact—you have only to apply to the bank-manager for a look at them.”

I thought this rather an unpleasant way of putting the matter. Its effect was to overwhelm my uncle with shame and confusion; and I really believe it cost him an effort for some time even to get a cheque changed over the counter of Messrs. Bullion and Tissue, for fear it should be supposed that he had gone thither to resolve his doubts. A fortnight afterwards he got a note from “Brother Alec,” informing him that, though not much improved in health, he had made up his mind to return to Kirkdale, since, after all, when one was sick, there was no place like home.

This communication, or rather the terms of it, for John had already informed me of his uncle’s discontent with the seaside, astonished us considerably.

The old man’s mind must have quite broken down, we all agreed, to have expressed himself in that way concerning the Priory.

Then, after a little, a note came to Gertrude from Mrs. Raeburn, to say that the invalid had returned, and begging her to bring her visit to the Rectory to a close, as she really could not spare her “dear companion” any longer. It was high time for me also to resume my legal studies; so Gerty and I returned to Kirkdale together, both feeling it very like going back to school after the holidays, yet pleased enough to feel that the misfortune was common to us both.

#### CHAPTER XXII. ALEC’S SICK-ROOM.

At the Priory we found things duller than ever, and poor brother Alec not even visible. The journey home had exhausted his little remaining strength, and it was necessary that he should keep his bed and recruit. This was nothing more than what Dr. Wilde had expected, and he

declined even to come and see his patient. It was clear he could do nothing for him; and since Mrs. Raeburn would not hear of his visiting him as a friend, without a fee, the sensitive doctor kept away altogether. I am bound to say that the old man’s relatives were very assiduous in their attentions to him; nothing was omitted that could conduce to his comfort, and almost everything was done for him with their own hands. Mark would spend hours talking with him by his bedside; John read the newspaper to him; and Mrs. Raeburn prepared his meals with her own hands. The sick man had arranged for the payment of his annuity by quarterly instalments, but of course his going to town in person to receive them was out of the question; and he wrote to the Insurance Office to that effect. His brain, Mrs. Raeburn protested, was still as clear as ever, and he took the same delight in his dumb favourites—if, indeed, the conversational Chico could be so designated. Their master’s inaction and confinement to his bed, however, was taken in dudgeon by both dog and bird, for the former howled and whined in a most depressing manner, while at all hours of the night I heard the latter croaking and mumbling what sounded like anathemas through the partition-wall. This was the more remarkable, since Mrs. Raeburn had informed me that what her brother-in-law seemed to crave for was perfect quiet, and expressed her regret that, under these circumstances, she could not admit me to his room. My uncle, however, rode over on one occasion, and insisted upon seeing his old friend, whom he described as looking better, rather than worse, but much disinclined for talk. Gertrude had also been privileged to visit the invalid once or twice, but of late this had been prohibited, on the ground that she had shown symptoms of a recurrence of the indisposition she had had before going to Stanbrook, and that the atmosphere of a sick room was injurious to her. At last a day came when the patient was pronounced sufficiently well to receive me, a circumstance of which I was very ready to avail myself, since I could not understand why John Raeburn should have been so long permitted access to his uncle’s chamber, while it had been denied to me. I set it down, indeed, naturally enough, to a desperate endeavour on Mrs. Raeburn’s part to influence the old man’s feelings, at the last, in behalf of her son; though, if brother Alec



was as well as she described him to be, I could not conceive how he himself submitted to such an arrangement. I had been always a favourite with him from his first arrival at the Priory, and our intimacy had greatly increased during his stay at Stanbrook; whereas John he had rather tolerated than encouraged. However, Heaven knows it was with no feeling of jealousy of the latter, far less of resentment against the changeable whim of an invalid, that I now entered brother Alec's apartment for the first time since my return to the Priory.

He was lying in bed, with his face turned towards the door, and therefore, to me, it was hid in shadow. Notwithstanding that it was a fine bright autumnal day, the sunlight was almost excluded from the room by Venetian blinds, an arrangement which made his sunbrowned features still more sombre. His eyes were by no means so piercing as of old, and gazed out at me from half-shut lids; else, I agreed with my uncle, that he looked no worse than when I had seen him last. I noticed, too, that the hand which he held out to me was tolerably plump, and grasped my own with some vigour. His voice, on the other hand, was low, and he contented himself for the most part with answering my questions about his health, of which he spoke, as indeed was his usual custom, with careless cheerfulness. He did not feel himself much weaker in body than when at Stanbrook, he said, but that conversation was wearisome to his brain. "When John has read the newspaper aloud, that is almost enough for me," added he, an excuse, as I understood, for his not having desired my company. Of course I accepted the apology, though it struck me as singularly illogical; for why should I be more inclined to converse than John (who, indeed, was an incessant talker), or less competent to read to him? Then he went on to speak of my uncle and aunt in terms of warm affection indeed, yet in conventional phrase, such as he had been by no means wont to use when under their roof. Without having any great originality, brother Alec had always avoided in the expression of his feelings such cut-and-dried terms as he used now; and I read in them, more than in all else, the decay of his mental powers. What also struck me as a bad sign about him was, that my presence did not, as usual, suggest any reference to Gertrude; that subtle link which connects thought with

thought—Association—appeared to have snapped already.

"Well, Chico," said I, turning from the old man to his bird, which, to my surprise, was in its cage, and addressing it cheerfully, "and how are you?"

"Dead, dead!" responded the bird, stroking his scarlet plume, and regarding the heap of nut-shells at his feet as though they had been a new-made grave. "Dead, dead! Only think of that!"

"Chico is not a cheerful companion for our patient," remarked Mrs. Raeburn, looking up from the book which she was reading, close by the window, where, indeed, alone light could be found for that purpose; "but I cannot persuade him to have that bird removed to another room."

"Let him be, let him be," murmured brother Alec from the bed. He had already closed his eyes, as if exhausted. Mrs. Raeburn threw up her hands, as much as to say, "You hear! He will have it so!"

"But the dog must be much worse," observed I, speaking, like Mrs. Raeburn herself, in a whisper; "its noise at night is sometimes awful."

"That is so, Mr. Sheddon; but we have at last persuaded our dear friend, here, to dispense with the creature. Fury will leave after to-day."

Looking towards the subject of our talk, for the first time I perceived, with great surprise, that, though occupying the same spot in the room as usual, the animal was chained to a staple of the wall.

"That measure of precaution was absolutely necessary," explained Mrs. Raeburn, interpreting my glance. "The beast has taken such an antipathy to John. Indeed, when he goes, it will be for all of us a most happy release."

I am quite sure Fury knew that Mrs. Raeburn was talking about him, and I think he knew what she said. At this ungracious reference to his departure, he fixed his bloodshot eyes upon her with a concentration of vision I have never seen except in a mesmerist, and uttered a menacing growl. "His master will miss him just at first, no doubt," continued she, quietly; "but in the end he cannot but be relieved by his absence."

Here Fury turned his blunt nose towards the ceiling, and, opening his enormous jaws, gave utterance to a howl of anguish, so prolonged and deep that it might have stood for the coronach of his entire race. Even brother Alec, well accustomed as he was to hear the voice of his favourite,

raised his heavy eyelids at the sound, and feebly smiled. I thought it a good opportunity to wish him good-bye for the present, since he was obviously disinclined for further talk, and I did so.

"Mr. Alexander is easily tired," observed Mrs. Raeburn, looking up once more from her book. "It may have seemed hard to have debarred you from this room so long, Mr. Sheddon, but you now know for yourself that there was a reason for it."

There was no denying this fact; and yet the reflection that I was to be excluded from poor brother Alec's presence for at least as long as I had already been, nay, perhaps even until his demise, not only saddened but chilled me; a shudder crept over me at the thought of his lying in that darkened room, watched by that hateful woman, and even with my feet upon its threshold, I hesitated to cross it.

"Perhaps, Mr. Sheddon, it would be more agreeable to your feelings," remarked Mrs. Raeburn, coldly, "to see our dear invalid alone. If so, you can do so." Then, reading my reply in my face, she rose from her chair, and with obtrusively careful tread, as though to remind me that I stood in a sick room, she moved into the next apartment and closed the door behind her.

If brother Alec had started from his pillow at that moment and cried, "Save me, save me from that woman!" I should not have been more astonished than I was by his total unconcern at this proceeding. I had certainly expected a smile of friendliness, perhaps even a whispered assurance that, notwithstanding that he had never sent for me, his sentiments towards me were what they had ever been; the presence of Mrs. Raeburn must surely have hitherto restrained him from expressing his feelings; and now he would be more like himself. But no; he uttered not a syllable. He had noticed her leave the room, I saw; yet he remained precisely as before—silent, motionless, without so much as turning his eyes towards me.

"I hope, Mr. Raeburn," said I, earnestly, "that you are quite comfortable here, and want for nothing. If you have any wish—or fear," (I said this very significantly, for I myself felt a shadowy apprehension of I know not what the while I spoke) "I beseech you to reveal it to me."

"Thank you, Sheddon," returned the sick man in low but distinct tones, "I am quite as I would be here; my relatives are all very kind."

His manner was cold, as though deprecating, if not resenting, my interference. It had been his wont, too, of late to call me "Harry," and not "Sheddon," and the change did not escape me.

"I hope," said I, "that I have, at all events, not offended you, Mr. Raeburn?"

"No, no, lad, but I am very tired; that is all."

He did not even put out his hand to me in farewell, but drawing the bed-clothes round about him, and feebly murmuring "Good-bye, good-bye," he once more closed his eyes.

I left the room with a heavy heart, and not a little wounded by this behaviour on the part of the old man, which to me was inexplicable. I had occasionally witnessed the irritability produced by illness; my Aunt Eleanor was a sufferer from neuralgia, and under its influence would deal out her sharp words to everybody, without distinction of sex or age, and including even her medical attendants; but brother Alec's conduct was altogether different. Moreover, he had been heretofore distinguished for his patience under pain; so far from diminishing the tenderness of his nature, his disease seemed rather to have intensified it.

"How did you find my brother, Sheddon?" whispered the attorney, who was sitting, as usual in the office, accompanied by his two clerks, John having been sent for that morning to a neighbouring town, from which he was not expected to return until the following night.

"Better than I expected, sir, in some respects; but in others greatly changed."

"Ah, here!" sighed Mark, touching his forehead significantly; "that is what we all see. Mr. Wilde prepared us for that, you know."

I did not think it worth while to explain that I had found the sick man altered in feeling rather than intelligence, but simply nodded assent. "It's very sad," continued the attorney, "but only what we must expect. It is fortunate that he is so well in his wits, poor fellow, as he is, since to-morrow he will have business to transact. The secretary of the Assurance Company is coming down to see him, and I have written to your uncle to be kind enough to ride over and meet him. They are old college friends, you know."

"So I heard," said I; "but how can my uncle help you; he is not a very good man of business, I fear."

"That is true; but I have begged him

to come over and smooth matters a bit. It will prevent Alec being excited if he sees old friends about him, and make the whole proceedings less formal."

"What proceedings?" inquired I, not with very good manners, perhaps; but I felt an extreme curiosity to know what possible use could be made of poor "Alec" under present circumstances by his devoted relatives.

"Well, it is merely a matter of form. Since my brother cannot go to town, the secretary must needs come down to convince himself of his being alive, before making the quarterly payment. Yet, merely passive as is the part our poor patient has to play, the idea of it agitates him in the most absurd degree. Though by no means without stamina, as you have seen, he exhibits all the nervousness of extreme debility."

I could not help remarking that, throughout that day, and still more upon the next, the attorney was greatly "agitated" also; which was the more unfortunate, since John being away, a larger share of the work of the office devolved upon himself. Our two assistants were mere copying-clerks—little more than boys in age—whose copying (from John's example, perhaps) included mimicry of their master as well as the duplication of legal documents. If the attorney employed them, by reason of their tender youth, with the idea that they would not keep so sharp an eye, as their elders might have done, upon his own proceedings, he was very egregiously mistaken. Often have I seen them tilt their ink-bottles and roll their heads with significance when Mark was more than usually overcome with liquor, and much they hailed the occasional absences of his son and heir, whose eye no pantomimic performance could escape; and who (in Jove's absence) would often admonish them by casting a thunderbolt, in the shape of an office-ruler, with the most unerring precision.

The attorney, who had taken less and less heed to his ways, in respect of drink, for some months past, seemed on this day to have cast off all decency; and, after dinner, could not be induced to leave his brandy-bottle, even to come into the drawing-room. It was well, indeed, that it so happened, since he was really not in a fit state to present himself there. His son's presence, and especially his wife's, had hitherto been some restraint upon

him; but now that the former was away, and the latter upstairs with the invalid, he seemed to have utterly given way to his wretched passion. I found Gertrude looking so very distressed and pale, that I thought at first she had become acquainted with this fact.

"My darling Gerty," cried I, "what is the matter?"

"Oh, nothing," answered she, trying to smile; "at least, nothing worse than what I have experienced already. But I am certainly not quite well."

"You look deadly ill," exclaimed I, with imprudent anxiety.

"That is because I have been in pain; but I am better now. Mrs. Raeburn has taken me in hand, and I think her treatment has been successful."

"What can you know about your illness? You ought to see Mr. Wilde at once," said I.

"No, no; there is really no necessity for that, Harry. He will only order me change of air again, which is ridiculous. Besides, I should be sorry to leave the house just now, when, at any time, I may be called upon to make myself useful to poor cousin Alexander. Mrs. Raeburn is wearing herself out with her constant attendance upon him. I must say she behaves very well in that respect."

"If you must say so, you must, my dear," returned I, with some irritation, for my one cause of quarrel with Gertrude was her too great charity with regard to that woman. "I believe Mrs. Raeburn's attentions to him are merely mercenary, and arise from the lowest motives."

"Well, at all events, they cannot be 'mercenary' in my case," pleaded my darling; "and she has certainly done me good."

It was hopeless to argue with her against anybody while she wore that generous smile, which would, in my eyes, have vindicated a Mother Brownrigg; so I only hushed her lips in lover's fashion, and then turned to other topics.

It was fated to be the last evening for many a one to be spent in that fashion by me.

#### NOTIFICATIONS EXTRAORDINARY.

AN American beauty, finding the food of love taken in the small hours not conducive to pleasant dreams and sweet repose, advertised the disturbers of her rest to stop singing "If ever I cease to love" beneath her window, and come indoors and talk business. This effectually scared the heart-stricken serenaders, none of whom, ap-



parently, meant serious business. If they did, they failed to arrange satisfactory terms of partnership, for, such a publicity-loving lady would assuredly have insisted upon the happy man proclaiming his happiness, after the manner of the Levenworth official, who thus warned off all aspirants to the affections he had secured:—"Engaged: Miss Anne Gould, to John Caudal, city marshal, both of Levenworth, Kansas. From this time henceforth and for ever, until Miss Anne Gould becomes a widow, all young men are requested to withdraw their particular attentions." If Kansas lovers are given to publishing their little arrangements in this way, a Kansas newspaper must be almost as lively reading as the Cherokee Times, which, recording the marriage of Mr. Sariah Pratt and Miss Mary Foote, says:—"Sariah is one of the best boys Cherokee ever had, and, now that he will Foote it the rest of his journey, we wish both him and his handsome young wife a happy wedded-life, with a good round number of Pratt-ling responsibilities to cheer the way and make life truly blest." The Cherokee editor's playfulness would hardly have been appreciated a quarter of a century ago, when the following specimen was thought a neat thing in marriage notices:—"Married simultaneously, on the 24th ult., by the Rev. J. W. Wallace, J. H. Burritt, Esq., of Connecticut, to Miss Ann W. Watson; and Mr. Augustus Wood, to Miss Sarah Wair, Columbia co., Georgia. The ceremony was conducted under the most engaging forms of decency, and was ministered with sober and impressive dignity. The subsequent hilarity was rendered doubly entertaining by the most pleasing urbanity and decorum of the guests; the convivial board exhibited an elegant profusion of all that fancy could mingle, or the most splendid liberality collect; nor did the nuptial evening afford a banquet less grateful to the intellectual senses. The mind was regaled with all that is captivating in colloquial fruition, and transported with all that is divine in the union of congenial spirits;

While hovering seraphs lingered near,  
And dropped their harps, so charmed to hear!"

In the happy coming-time, when the sexes shall stand upon a footing of perfect equality, the dupes of fair flirts will, doubtless, find twelve good women and true ready to make defaulting damsels pay for promise breaking. A jilted lover will not need to take his revenge in an irregular way, like the gentleman who ad-

vertised in the General Advertiser:—

"Whereas, on Sunday, April 12th, 1750, there was seen in Cheapside, between the hours of four and five in the afternoon, a young gentleman, dressed in a light-coloured coat, with a blue waistcoat trimmed with silver lace, along with a young lady in mourning, going towards St. Martin's near Aldersgate. This is, therefore, to acquaint the said gentleman (as a friend) to be as expeditious as possible in the affair, lest otherwise he should unhappily meet with the same disappointment at last, by another stepping in in the meantime, as a young gentleman has been lately served by the aforesaid young lady, who, after a courtship of these four months last past, and that with her approbation, and in the most public manner possible, and with the utmost honour as could possibly become a gentleman. Take this, sir, only as a friendly hint." Far less courteous, under similar provocation, was the discarded suitor who proclaimed:—"Whereas, Parmelia B. did promise to marry me on the 19th instant, but, instead of doing so, did flunk and run off, I brand her as a liar and a person of bad character generally." Possibly the fickle Parmelia had very good reasons for changing her mind; at any rate, the rejected groom might have vented his wrath in milder terms. Mary Dodd, of Livingstone county, Kentucky, was fully justified in denouncing a gay deceiver as she did, in the Kentucky Reporter, of the fifth of September, 1817:—"Take notice and beware of the swindler Jesse Dougherty, who married me in November last, and some time after marriage informed me that he had another wife alive, and before I recovered, the villain left me, and took one of my best horses. One of my neighbours was so good as to follow him and take the horse from him, and bring him back. The said Dougherty is about forty years of age, five feet ten inches high, round shouldered, thick lips, complexion and hair dark, grey eyes, remarkably ugly and ill-natured, very fond of ardent spirits, and by profession a notorious liar. This is, therefore, to warn all widows to beware of the swindler, as all he wants is their property, and he cares not where they go after he gets that. The said Dougherty has a number of wives living, perhaps eight or ten (the number not positively known), and will, no doubt, if he can get them, have eight or ten more. I believe that is the way he makes his living.—MARY DODD."

Spite of his ugliness the widow-hunter seems to have found women were to be had for the asking. Matthew Dawson, of Bothwell, Cumberland, thought they were to be had without asking, and advertised his marriage without troubling to provide a bride for the occasion. After announcing that the happy event would come off at Holm Church, on the Thursday before Whitsuntide, the impudent rascal went on:—"Mr. Reid gives a turkey to be roasted; Ed. Clementson gives a fat lamb to be roasted; Jos. Gibson gives a fat calf to be roasted. And in order that all this meat may be well basted, do you see, Mary Pearson, Betty Hodgson, Mary Berkley, Molly Fisher, Sarah Briscoe, and Betty Porthones give, each of them, a pound of butter. The advertiser will provide everything else. And he hereby gives notice to all young women desirous of changing his condition that he is at present disengaged; and advises them to consider, that, although there is luck in leisure, yet in this case delays are dangerous; for with him he is determined it shall be first come first served." Fifty years ago, a Cumberland wedding was a formidable affair. A handbill, dated 1820, runs thus:—"Notice is hereby given, that the marriage of Isaac Paterson with Frances Atkinson, will be solemnised in due form in the parish Church of Lamplugh, on Tuesday next, the 30th of May. Immediately after which, the bride and bridegroom, with their attendants, will proceed to Lomefort, in the said parish, when the nuptials will be celebrated by a variety of novel entertainments:—

Then come, one and all,  
At Hymen's soft call;

From Whitehaven, Workington, Harrington, Dean,  
Hail, Ponsonby, Blains, and all places between;  
From Egremont, Cockermouth, Paston, St. Bees,  
Cint, Kinnyside, Calder, and parts joining these;  
And the country at large may come in if they please.  
Such sports there will be as have seldom been seen;  
Such wrestling, and firing, and dancing between;  
And races for prizes, for frolic, and fun,  
By horses, and asses, and dogs will be run,  
That you'll all go home happy as sure as a gun.  
In a word, such a wedding can ne'er fail to please,  
For the sports of Olympus were trifles to these!

Impelled by the vexatious want of pence, Sterne became joint proprietor of a grimy window in a Cornhill alley, or rather he rented a single pane of it, in order to inform the public that—Epigrams, anagrams, paragrams, chronograms, monograms, epitaphs, epithalamiums, prologues, epilogues, madrigals, interludes, advertisements, letters, petitions, memorials on every occasion, essays on all subjects, pamphlets

for and against ministers, with sermons upon any text or for any sect, would be supplied on reasonable terms by A.B., philologist. Yorick was not, evidently, very particular as to how he turned a penny, but he had more pride than the unappreciated genius who lately announced in a London shop-window:—"Goods removed, messages taken, carpets beaten, and poetry composed on any subject." John Grove, of White Waltham, Berkshire, did not pretend to supply poetry on demand, perhaps he exhausted his powers that way in the rhymes he set over his door, to tell the world of White Waltham:—

John Grove, grocer, and dealer in tea,  
Sells the finest of congon and best of bohea;  
A dealer in coppices, and measurer of land;  
Sells the finest of snuff, and fine lily-white sand;  
A singer of psalms, and a scrivener of money,  
Collects the land-tax, and sells fine virgin honey;  
A ragman, a carrier, a baker of bread,  
He's clerk to the living as well as the dead;  
Vestry clerk, petty constable, sells scissars and knives,  
Best vinegar and buckles; and collects the small tithes.  
He's treasurer to clubs, a maker of wills;  
He surveys men's estates, and vends Henderson's pills;  
Woollen draper and hosier; sells all sorts of shoes,  
With the best earthenware; also takes in the news;  
Deals in hurdles and eggs, sells the best of small beer,  
The finest sea coals; and elected overseer.  
He's deputy-overseer, sells fine writing-paper;  
Has a vote for the county; and a linen-draper;  
A dealer in cheese, sells the best Hampshire bacon,  
Plays the fiddle divinely, if I'm not mistaken.

Even this man of many vocations, or the American dry-goods merchant who, besides practising both as lawyer and doctor, was capable of "auctioneering of the loudest kind, interwoven with ventriloquism," must yield the palm of versatility to Colin Pullinger, who still solicits public patronage at Selsey, near Chichester, as: "Contractor, inventor, fisherman, and mechanic; following the various trades and professions of a builder, carpenter, joiner, sawyer, undertaker, turner, cooper, painter, glazier, sign-painter, wooden-pump maker, paper-hanger, bell-hanger, boat-builder, clock-cleaner, locks repaired and keys fitted, repairer of umbrellas and parasols, mender of china and glass, net knitter, wire worker, grocer, baker, farmer, stuffer and preserver of the skins of birds and insects, copying-clerk, letter-writer, accountant, surveyor, engineer, land-measurer, house-agent, vestry-clerk, assistant-overseer, clerk to the Selsey Sparrow Club, clerk to the Selsey police, assessor and collector of land tax and property and income tax, collector of church and highway-rates;

has served at sea in the four quarters of the world, as seaman, sailmaker, cook, steward, mate, and navigator; the maker and inventor of an improved horse-shoe, an improved scarifier, a newly-invented couch-grass-cutter, a machine to tar rope, model of a vessel to cut asunder chains put across the mouths of harbours, a curious mouse-trap made on a scientific principle, where each mouse caught re-sets the trap to catch the next, requires no fresh baiting, and will catch them by dozens; also a mouse-trap on a most novel, ingenious, and simple construction, being perpetually set, the bait will last for months, every mouse enters the trap through the same opening, and is most effectually secured, first on one side, the next on the other, and so on in succession, catching any number; rat-traps on various constructions, an improved mole-trap, model of a steamboat on quite a new and improved construction, four feet long, and challenged to beat any boat of the same length in the world; crabs, lobsters, and prawns sent to any part of the world; mouse and rat traps lent on hire at one penny per week; an evening school; a penny savings bank. If you doubt me, try me." Beside this village Crichton's trade placard, the following odd one from Gloucestershire is commonplace:—"Johnny Overy lives here, teaches music by steam, egg merchant and parish-clerk, pig-killer and bell-man. J. O. sells red herrings and raisins, parasols and pistols, barm and sand, fiddle-strings and flour, tripe, dubbing, and all kinds of hardware but treacle." This, moreover, is surpassed in originality by the notice issued in 1820, by Burness and Son, down Bridgewater way, which ran thus:—"Burness and Son: blacksmith's and barber's work done here, horse-shoeing and shaving, locks mended and hare-curling, bleeding, teeth-drawing, and all other farriery work; all sorts of spirates lickor akording to the late comerce treaty. Tak notis; my wife keeps skool and lerns folks as yu shall; teches reading and riting, and all other langurthes, and has assistants if required, to teach horritory, sowing, the mathematics, and all other fashionable diversions."

If the "skool" kept by the wife of Burness and Son was open to both sexes, it must surely have been one of that learned dame's pupils that advertised on the wall of the Bristol Exchange: "To marchants, traders, and uthers. A young man, about thirty years of age, who understands the bakker business and husbandry, would be

glad to go to A-merry-ka or any outlandish place, as a hover seer and the like of that. N.B.—Has no objection to go to Bottomey Bay as a skool maaster, on condition his life can be insured to the wild sauvaiges." More contemptuous still of ordinary orthography was the free and independent Missourian who emphatically notified all comers:—"Ce hear! Eye don't want ennybodi that has hosses which has the eppidutick infleunze or ani other infeirnal name to cum thru this gait under penalty. Keep shi!" But even he would have had a fair chance of winning a spelling match if pitted against the officials of a certain Warwickshire parish, who, five years back, posted on the church-door a "List of the men resisiding withen the parish of B— quified and libbe to serve as constbulls made out and agreed to at a metting of the inhabitance theiroy investery for that purpose held on the third day of March, one thousand eaght hundurd and sevennty;" and underneath it another document running:—"Notic is hearby geven that there will be a vestery Meeting heald in the skolroom at B— T—, on Munnday, March 21st, at fouer clock in the afternoon, fur nomination of gurdians and to chosen frech overseers and other offesers for the said parish, and other bissness, for tu surve for the forth suen year 1870." With all their ingenuity, the Warwickshire improvers of the Queen's English did not attain the unintelligible like the Welshman who wrote over his cottage-door, "Agoser-gurdere," which, being interpreted for the benefit of a puzzled traveller, resolved itself into "Agues are cured here." Loose spellers sometimes put their words together as queerly as they spell them. An Irishman advertised:—"Straid away, on Saturday the 4, to roned splining cows, one horney one milky, enny person giving information will be hansably rewarded by replying to —, New ary Co. down." On a tree in a field near Manchester might once be read:—"Nottis. Know kow is alloued in these medders, eny men or women letten their kows run the rode wot gits inter my medders aforesaid, shall have his tail cut orf by me.—Obadiah Rogers." An Arkansas ferryman intimated to all whom it might concern:—"Ef ennybody cums hear arter lickor, or to git across the river, they can jes blow this hear horn, and ef I don't cum when my Betsey up at the house hears the horn blown, she'll cum down and sell them the lickor or set them across the river when i'm away



from hoam.—JOHN WILSON. N.B.—Them that can't red will have to go to the Hons arter Betsey, tant but half a mile there."

In the time of Napoleon the Third, a notice was placed at the entrance to the Pavilion Henri Quatre, at St. Germain, setting forth:—"The persons hereunder mentioned are not allowed to enter—1. Men in working clothes; 2. Women without bonnets; 3. Servants without their masters or mistresses; 4. Children without their parents; 5. Wives without their husbands; 6. Dogs without their muzzles." Somebody blundered, but that somebody has the consolation of knowing officials of the new regime are just as fallible. When the prefect of Lyons decreed that cafés and wine shops must close their doors at half-past eleven, he thought it necessary to warn all persons chancing to be in such places at that time of night, that they must leave without being compelled to do so. His brother, of Grenoble, capped this, by announcing—No burfal without religious rites would be permitted except with the express wish of the deceased; displaying as much consideration for the defunct as the officials of the War Department did in ordering that "Whenever a soldier on half-pay shall die, or whenever a soldier shall be placed upon half-pay, he shall be informed of it by the War Minister." Impracticable rules are easily made; it is not so easy to make a regulation defying evasion, a feat accomplished by the authorities of Denver, when they notified all travellers over the town bridge that, "No vehicle, drawn by more than one animal, is allowed to cross this bridge in opposite directions at the same time."

A clerical landowner, finding his warrens were poached while he preached, sought to insure his game a quiet Sunday by warning offenders in this wise:—"Remember the Sabbath to keep it holy. Beware, my friends, your names are all known. If you trespass on these fields, or touch my rabbits, you will be prosecuted according to the law." The reverend rabbit-preserver was not inclined to make nice distinctions like the turnip-grower, who politely intimated—"Ladies and gentlemen are requested not to steal the turnips; other persons, if detected, will be prosecuted." And he might have taken a lesson in liberality from the gentleman who put up a board inscribed—"Ten shillings reward. Any person found trespassing on these lands or damaging these fences, on conviction, will receive the

above reward." It may be questioned if he would have been as true to his word as the Aberdeen factor who was wont to jog the memory of a laggard tenant with—

To avoid all proceedings unpleasant,  
I beg you will pay what is due;  
If you do, you'll oblige me at present;  
If you don't, why, I'll oblige you!

Equally uncompromising were the rampant Protectionists responsible for the following caution to the public, which appeared in a London newspaper in 1798:—"There is great reason to believe that there is at this time some foreign manufactured muffs and other velvets brought into this kingdom. The public should be very cautious how they buy, as there is, by the late Act of Parliament, a penalty of one hundred pounds for every piece or remnant, with a forfeiture thereof, and everything with it; and as the journeymen weavers (who are such great sufferers) have appointed some of their number to patrol London, with full resolution to make public examples of every person who may be so unfortunate as to fall into their hands with foreign muffs, either in the streets, shops, &c.—From the body of Journeymen Velvet Weavers. N.B.—The difference is so great between the English and foreign, that any person is able to distinguish." This, at all events, is plain English, which cannot be said of the notice lately posted at a Welsh railway station:—"List of booking. You passengers must careful. For have their level money for tickets, and to apply at once for asking tickets when will booking window open; no tickets to have after departure of the train." Why, our Japanese admirers can do better than that, for, although "The trees cutting, birds and beasts killing, and cows and horses setting in free at the ground belonging to the government are forbidden," might be improved upon, no Englishman would misunderstand the drift of Osaka Fu's decree, whatever the natives may make of it.

No writer of stories with a purpose ever succeeded so thoroughly as Foote, when he invented his tale of the Grand Panjandrum for Macklin's discomfiture, which remains unsurpassed as a piece of pure nonsense; but a Lahore hotel-keeper's notice to his customers would serve equally well as a mnemonic test, for we might safely "bet our pile" against any of his patrons finding a place in their memory for such a wondrous example of English composition as this:—"Gentlemen who

come in hotel not say anything about their meals they will be charged for, and if they should say beforehand that they are going out to breakfast or dinner, &c., and if they say that they have not anything to eat, they will be charged, and if not so, they will be charged, or unless they bring it to the notice of the manager of the place; and should they want to say anything, they must order the manager for, and not anyone else, and unless they not bring it to the notice of the manager, they will charge for the least things according to the hotel rate, and no fuss will be allowed afterwards about it. Should any gentleman take wall-lamp or candle-light from the public rooms, they must pay for it without any dispute its charges. Monthly gentlemen will have to pay my fixed rate made with them at the time, and should they absent day in the month, they will not be allowed to deduct anything out of it, because I take from them less rate than my usual rate of monthly charges." A merrier-minded host put up in his bar, in Virginia City, Nevada, this bill of instructions:—"Drink plain drinks; buy them at the bar; eat a light lunch; pay coin for what you get; drink light, but often; ask all your friends to drink; don't bring tooth-picks; don't try to spar the bar-keeper; keep six-shooters uncocked; don't steal the papers; be virtuous and you will be happy." We trust it was not to this worthy's door the notice was affixed "This hotel is closed on account of a difference between the proprietor and the cook, which was settled by pistols, and sent the proprietor to the grave and the cook to the gaol."

Not long ago, the girls of a Maine factory, rather than submit to a reduction of wages, gave the millowners a month's notice, and at the same time issued a notice to the public in general, and the masculine public in particular, in these words:—"We are now working out our notice: can turn our hands to most anything; don't like to be idle, but determined not to work for nothing when folks can afford pay. Who wants help? We can make bonnets, dresses, puddings, pies; knit, roast, stew, and fry; make butter and cheese, milk cows and feed chickens, hoe corn, sweep out the kitchen, put the parlour to rights, make beds, split wood, kindle fires, wash and iron, besides being remarkably fond of babies; in fact, can do most anything the most accomplished housewife is capable of doing, not forgetting the scoldings on Mondays or Saturdays. For specimens

of our spirit we'll refer you to our overseers. Speak quick! Black eyes, fair foreheads, clustering locks, beautiful as Hebe; can sing like a seraph, and smile most bewitchingly. An elderly gentleman, who wants a good housekeeper, or a nice young man in want of a wife—willing to sustain either character—in fact, we are in the market. Who bids! Going, going, gone! Who's the lucky man?" If these Maine girls be ordinary samples of the American factory girls, no wonder Sam Slick's friend put a notice over his gates at Lowell—"No cigars or Irishmen admitted within these walls," and pleaded in justification that "the one would set a flame agoing among the cottons, and the other among the gals."

#### WAS IT I?

In the morning the light breezes shiver,  
The soft cloudlets flit o'er the sky;  
Who ran in her mirth by the river?  
Was it I? Was it I?  
Whose voice rang out, as clear and gay,  
As the joyous breath of the wakening day;  
Who cheered the dog to the flashing leap,  
Where the pebbles shone and the banks were steep;  
Who lay on the daisies to watch the lark  
Lose its twinkling wings in the great blue arc;  
Who laughed at the brown hares darting by?  
Was it I? Was it I?  
In the sunset the lithe willows quiver,  
The rose-tint is flooding the sky;  
Who loitered of old by the river?  
Was it I? Was it I?  
Who watched the blue forget-me-nots gleam,  
And the water-lilies float on the stream;  
Who blushed as a strong arm drew them near,  
And a low voice whispered close and dear,  
How fair the waxen flowers would show,  
'Mid the golden braids in the ball-room's glow?  
Oh! the happy silence, hushed and shy,  
Was it I? Was it I?  
The black ice-bands crackle and shiver,  
As the pale wintry sun lights the sky;  
Who stands by the cold sullen river?  
Is it I? Is it I?  
With hair that is touched by the fallen snow,  
And a step that was eager, long ago;  
Ah me! since then its faltering tread  
Has followed the train of beloved dead,  
And has learnt the watcher's cautious ways,  
And must needs go softly all its days,  
And memory owes, with a patient sigh,  
It, was I! It is I!

#### THE RED HOUSE.

A STORY IN SEVEN CHAPTERS. CHAPTER I.

THEY were not nice lodgings, certainly. But what could I do? The place was full; no others could be found. You see it was the week of the assizes; about the dulllest town in England had therefore become lively all on a sudden, putting from it for a while the cares usually oppressing it touching the woolstapling

trade, the state of the corn market, and bucolic interests generally. The judges were hard at work in the courts beside the town-hall, trying cases and sentencing convicts. Wigs and gowns had become common objects of the High-street and the Market-place; the Bar had secured possession of all the lodgings that could anyhow be discovered. One eminent Q.C. was to be found on a confined first-floor over a barber's shop; a distinguished serjeant-at-law had established himself at the greengrocer's round the corner; rising juniors were dispersed all over the town.

So I had to do the best I could. I wanted a bed-room, and a room that I could convert into a sort of office, with a spacious table in it upon which I could spread out my drawings and plans. I was employed, I may state, in constructing the new line of railway, which, passing within a quarter of a mile of the town, crossed the river, bored through the hills beyond, and so forced its way into Wales.

In reply to repeated inquiries I learnt, at length, that I might possibly hear of lodgings at the Red House; but this was not very confidently said. And my interlocutors, as it seemed to me, dropped their voices and looked askance when they made mention of the Red House. Still they averred it was the best they could do for me. I couldn't miss it, I was told: a square red-brick house outside the town, close to the gasworks; anyone would point it out to me.

I found it readily enough. It looked something like an old farmhouse unaccountably transplanted from the open country to a dingy suburb. In truth, its situation was as disagreeable as well could be. Towering gasometers overshadowed it, poisoning the air; it was half washed by a slimy green stagnant pool; it was neighboured by numberless little rows of shabby, stunted dwelling-places—such as are cheaply run up for artisan occupation. Nevertheless, the house itself possessed a certain picturesqueness in right of the pleasant patches of moss and lichen, and the ragged mask of ivy, screening its weather-stained red face; its high roof interrupted here and there by gable-ends, and its soaring chimney-stacks of handsome design and proportions. All was in a deplorable state of decay, however; the slates were slipping one by one down the steep incline of the roof; the need of paint, whitewash, and cleansing was everywhere

manifest; there was scarcely a whole window in the house, and the many broken panes were either left broken or untidily mended with paper, rags, or odd fragments of deal board. The garden was neglected—a wilderness of weeds, with rank grass growing thickly over the uneven, ill-kept path; of the palings that had once inclosed it, few remained. Altogether the place wore a woe-begone aspect—it looked blighted, poverty-stricken, squalid, uncanny.

There was neither bell nor knocker. I rapped on the door with my walking-stick. A man opened it—a middle-aged man, shabbily and slovenly dressed, with his scowling, coarse-featured face half hidden by a ragged iron-grey beard, and long, thick, dusty hair that tumbled over his forehead to his eyebrows.

"Lodgings?" he repeated after me, when I had mentioned to him the object of my visit. "We don't let lodgings. Not but what we've a deal more room here than we want."

"Then why not let lodgings?" I ventured to observe.

"Why not indeed?" he said, gazing at me rather stupidly and tugging at his beard. "Who sent you here?" he inquired presently.

I told him I had been busy all the morning searching for lodgings, and that a chance person I had met in the streets, in reply to my inquiries, had bid me try at the Red House.

"Was it the master?"

"Who's the master?"

"No, it couldn't well be," he muttered, lost in thought, and tumbling his rough hair into increased disorder by passing his dingy fingers through it. "The master's at work;" here he permitted himself a curious sort of chuckle; "it wasn't like him to send you here. It's about the last thing he'd think of doing."

"Well, can I have the lodgings?" I asked again, bringing him back to the proper subject of our discourse.

"You've been hoaxed, young man. This ain't a lodging-house—not to say a regular lodging-house. Someone's been making a fool of you."

"There's no great harm done, anyhow," I said. "I'm sorry to have troubled you."

"Oh, it's no trouble. Stay a bit." I was moving away, but on his saying this I turned towards him again. "You would pay for lodgings, supposing we made room for you?"

"Of course I'd pay."



"Handsomely?"

"Reasonably."

"And you wouldn't mind making shift a bit, seeing that we're not used to letting lodgings—that we're quite new to the business?"

"I could make anything do, almost. Shelter and room to turn round in; I don't want much more than that."

"We could manage that, I think. But you'll find us rough—the master and me—I warn you of that. So don't say I didn't, afterwards. We're a queer lot, an uncommon queer lot we are. You'll have to put up with a deal. I suppose you can contrive to do without a lady's-maid for a while?" he said, with a grim kind of sneer. "We can't pretend to do much waiting on you."

"You don't keep a servant?"

"Well, we don't. An old body comes to tidy up and help now and then—to scrub or scour, wash or iron, or what not. She'd do any mortal thing for a glass of gin, would that old 'oman. You'd think her a witch to look at. We'll get her to make your bed; it will be but a shake-down, you understand; for the Red House isn't what it used to be, and things has got into a good deal of confusion inside. I ain't certain as I can lay my hand on anything in the shape of bed-room furniture, linen or counterpanes, or the likes of that. But I'll do the best I can for you. Shall you be wanting your boots blacked? Well, I'm pretty sure there's a blacking-brush somewheres about. As for towels—well, we must find something for you. Master and me ain't very particular, you see. We're used to roughing it, and making things do, and getting along anyhow. For my part, I don't mind owning I'm more comfortable-like when I'm dirty than when I'm clean. Still I think I could find you a morsel of yaller soap, if I only gave my mind to it. The master likes to have something of a clean-up now and then, when the fit takes him. He's what you call a curious character, is the master, take him all round."

"And you and he are the only tenants of this large house?"

"Yes, that's about it. Come along inside and look about you."

#### CHAPTER II.

I FOLLOWED him into the house. He was careful to close, and even to bar, the door after us.

The ruinous look characterising the

exterior was fully present within. All was dirt and decay. The air was laden with dust, and with close, unwholesome odours. The rooms were carpetless; but the floors uneven and shattered, as though the boards had been splintered by violent ill-usage, or rent away altogether; the ceilings were black with dirt and smoke; the walls were cracked and blistered, or stained with large patches of green mould. There were spacious rooms on the right and left as we entered. Of these I had but a glimpse through the half-open doors. One appeared to be used as a kitchen. Both were almost bare of furniture; unprovided with blinds or window-curtains, and exceedingly dirty. The staircase was broad and of an old-fashioned, substantial character, of dark oak apparently. But there had been cruel maltreatment of the carved balusters; many had departed altogether; certain of the others looked as though they had been hacked with a knife, or battered with a mallet.

"This would be about the thing for you, I should say, when it's a trifle brushed up and put to rights. There's a lock and key to the door, you see, all complete. You wouldn't find that everywhere."

He led the way as he spoke into a large room on the first-floor, and threw open the shutters that I might the better view the accommodation offered me.

"The bed-room is through that door yonder."

It was a cheerless place. A few ragged moth-eaten scraps of carpet strewed the floor. There was but little furniture; a table in the centre and three or four chairs, all exhibiting signs of ill-treatment and decay; with evidence, nevertheless, that they had originally been of a good, substantial, and even costly kind. The dust lay very thickly upon the creaking, shattered floor, as, indeed, upon every object in the room.

"Will it do?"

"Well—I must try and make it do, I suppose."

"We can clean it up a bit, maybe."

"It would stand a good deal of cleaning."

"But you haven't seen the bed-room. Take care; there's a step down. That board's a little unsteady; perhaps I might find a nail somewheres to fix it for you. It's rather dark, this room. The window's small, and the gasometer outside blocks out the light so. But it's what one might call a snug sort of room."

"One might call it that, certainly, but it wouldn't be particularly true. Well, what rent do you want for this precious accommodation?"

"Would five shillings a week hurt you?" he asked, after an interval of severe self-communing the while he had scrutinised me from under his bushy eyebrows and falling locks of hair, tugged at his beard, and even thrust a handful of it into his mouth, torn it with his teeth, and laboured apparently to consume it altogether.

It was agreed that I was to pay five shillings a week rent for the rooms, and I was to enter upon possession of them forthwith, with a proviso that some measures were to be taken in the direction of cleaning and repairing.

"And, mind. I've let 'em to you, not the master. You pay the money to me, and not to him. He's naught to do with it. It's no sort of affair of his. If he should try it on, don't you be persuaded to let him have sight of your money."

"And your name is—"

"My name is Mark Voss. I'm not ashamed on it. Mark Voss. Do you hear?"

"And the master, as you call him. What's his name?"

"What's that matter, to you or to any one? Call him 'the master' as I do. Isn't that name enough? Can't you make that do?" He spoke very angrily.

I said I'd try and make it do; that it didn't matter a straw to me what his name was. And so I departed.

My luggage had been left at the railway station. I engaged a porter to wheel it on a truck to the Red House. He stared at me.

"You know it?"

"I know it fast enough. But it seems a strange place for you to be putting up at, my young master. The Red House of all houses in the world! I've been in this town a many years now, but I never before was asked to wheel luggage down to the Red House!"

#### CHAPTER III.

MARK VOSS was as good as his word. When I returned in the evening, he was carrying out our provision that something should be done towards cleaning the place. He had taken off his coat and rolled up his shirt-sleeves; he was busily plying a mop, having first emptied a bucket of water on the floor. I cannot say I think he was doing much good.

The bed-room certainly did not look inviting. A tressle-bed, covered with a patchwork counterpane, stood in a corner. The sheets were ragged, of very coarse texture, and not merely damp—they were wringing wet. Fortunately, I possessed a good supply of railway rugs, which I could substitute for the sheets. There was a rickety washing-stand; a dirty, mildewed chest of drawers. I was prepared to rough it. I knew that my stay in the place could be but brief; that for some hours every day I needs must be absent from the Red House. And I had a youthful ability to sleep under almost any circumstances. My dilapidated rooms and their decayed furniture, the Red House and my strange landlord, Mark Voss, afforded me, indeed, considerable amusement. My curiosity was somewhat roused, and I was supplied with abundant opportunities for indulging in conjecture and speculation.

My sitting-room window commanded a view of the desolate, wild, and neglected garden; the bed-room window looked on to the gasworks. I could see from neither the main entrance to the house.

Mark ceased from his toil. He refreshed himself with a draught from a wicker flask he carried in his pocket. An odour of whisky pervaded the chamber. His face was very red from hard work, and, as I now perceived, from drink. His speech had become indistinct and his gait unsteady.

"You'll do now. I don't know when I had such a tough job. But you're all right and tidy now."

"Is 'the master' in yet?"

"Not yet," he answered, with an oath. "But he'll be back soon enough, come when he may. The cur—the coward—the miserable sneaking fool! I hate the master! I should like——"

Failing in words to express his desire, he resorted to violent gestures, importing the infliction of severe chastisement, the while he ground his teeth and emitted angry, animal noises. Soon after he withdrew.

Who was this man, I asked myself. What had he been? What was his position in life? A sailor? Possibly. He had rather a rolling gait; there were elaborate devices—in which figured initial letters, mermaids, anchors, and true lovers' knots—tattooed, I had noticed, upon his brawny arms. And yet the man had scarcely the aspect or the ways of a sailor, either. The unwholesome redness

of his face was not the result of exposure to sun and wind. It seemed to me that whisky had much more to do with it.

And who was the man he called "the master," and abused so fiercely, and hated, as it appeared, so bitterly? What had brought these two men together? What induced them to live in so dilapidated a building?

As yet I had not seen "the master." I was occupying myself with rearranging my rooms, with a view to their better appearance and my increased comfort. I had discovered some coals in a cupboard, and some fragments of wood. It was not cold, but still the place was very damp, and I thought a fire would be cheering; so, with some difficulty, I lit one. The chimney smoked vexatiously at first; but by-and-by the flames blazed and crackled pleasantly, and I was gratified with my performance. I drew the easiest chair I could find to the front of the grate; there was no fender, so I rested my slipped feet upon the hobs. I lit a cigar.

Presently I could hear some one enter below. "The master," probably. Angry talking followed. Mark and the master were quarrelling—reviling, swearing at, threatening each other. Then came the sound of a footstep upon the stairs. A man entered my room.

"What do you do here?" he demanded, angrily. "I won't have it. You must get out of this. You've no business here."

He was very pale, with long, light hair—a man of about thirty, perhaps, of handsome features, although his face was worn by ill-health, or, it might be, dissoluteness of life. He was shabbily dressed; his clothes were soiled and torn; his shirt-collar was ragged, and the frayed ends of a rusty black neckerchief, tied in a slovenly bow, straggled out untidily; his waistcoat was held together but by few remaining buttons; his boots were split and miry. And yet there was a certain air of refinement about the man. Violent as he was, negligent and almost squalid of appearance, he seemed to me one fallen from a more prosperous condition—one of gentle origin, upon whom some strange ill-fortune had borne very hardly.

He was trembling with passion. His long thin hands were waved in the air as he spoke; his eyes were bloodshot; his lips colourless.

I replied to him as calmly as I could, explaining the circumstances that brought me to the Red House. I stated that I had

engaged the rooms of Mark Voss for a week at the rent he had determined.

"Mark Voss, indeed!" he screamed with an oath. "I'll Mark Voss him. The insolent beggar! The lying hound. Is it his house? Is he master here? What right has he to do this? How dare he take upon himself to act in this way. A pretty thing, indeed! But it shan't be. I won't have it."

I interrupted him. I begged him to be calm. I assured him that if there had been any mistake—that if my stay in the house occasioned him any inconvenience, I would assuredly take my departure as soon as possible—early on the following morning, if I could so manage it.

He seemed pacified. "I'm not complaining of you," he said. "It's not your fault, I know. It's all that infernal Mark. What rent did he ask you?"

"Five shillings."

"The villain! The lying, extortionate scoundrel. Five shillings to be spent in drink, that's what it means. But it shan't be. You shan't pay him a farthing, mind that. I say it. I'm master here. Stay here if you like in the old house—it's a wretched den of a place when all's said—but stay as my guest; mine, you understand. I'm a nice person to talk of entertaining a guest, I know; and this is a pretty place, this Red House, to entertain a guest in!" He laughed bitterly. "But, blackguard as I look, and am, for that matter, I was a gentleman once; at least," he added in an altered tone, "folks so counted me. For my part, I think I was bad right through from the beginning, though not, perhaps, so bad as I am now."

He had grown calmer now. He spoke, looking at the fire, with a contemplative, reminiscent air. He moved towards a chair. Before, as I believe, he was quite conscious of what he was doing, he had taken up my cigar-case and drawn from it a cigar. Suddenly, with a slight flush upon his face, he returned it to the case and thrust that far from him.

"Pray light a cigar," I said, and I formally proffered him the case.

"No," he said, as he rose. "It wouldn't be right. I'm not fit to be sitting here with you. If you knew all, you'd say so too. I know what I've come to, and my proper place; the cellar or the kennel with Mark Voss for company. I'll go now. You're welcome to such shelter as this beastly den affords, pray understand that,



without paying a sou for it, whatever Mark Voss may say. Good night!"

He bowed and quitted the room, closing the door after him.

"What, you here, you vagabond!" I heard him saying outside, almost immediately. "What do you mean by dogging me and trying to listen at keyholes?"

"I thought you might get blabbing," Mark Voss answered.

There was the sound of a scuffle carried on great part of the way down the staircase. In the passage below the conflict continued.

I went out on the landing. "What is the matter. What are you doing?"

There was silence for a few moments.

"It's nothing, nothing," Mark Voss said, "only 'the master's' just a little troublesome to-night. He gets a bit flighty at times. It's one of his bad nights to-night. Lock your door. Do you hear? Whatever you do, be sure you lock your door."

I heard "the master" abusing his companion in a low voice. There was much discussion between them.

Presently they parted. Mark withdrew to the kitchen. The master entered the opposite room on the right-hand side of the staircase.

I could hear them both noisily locking, bolting, and barring their doors. Each seemed to regard the other as a dangerous wild beast to be kept apart from. There was, as I judged, bitter hatred between them; distrust and suspicion; and yet they lived together, the only tenants of the Red House, with myself for a while their lodger or their guest. Which? But it did not much matter which.

I was very careful to lock my door. However, the night passed away quietly enough.

#### FASCINATION AND THE EVIL EYE.

THE word "fascination" has both a good and a bad meaning: the one due to Nature, and the other, to Superstition. As commonly understood, and in its favourable sense, fascination depends upon manner, appearance, and conversation; but, in reality, upon the soul that looks from the eloquent eyes.

The fascination of the eye is not confined to one sex; for the tender light that beams from the countenance of a man, under the stimulus of affection, has as much influence over the heart and imagi-

nation of women, at the susceptible period of life, as the softer eye of woman has over man's at the same period. But, irrespective of love, or even of hate, there is a magnetism in the fixed look of a resolute and intellectual eye, which exerts itself independently of the will or knowledge of the person on whom it may be directed, as most people have experienced, when, made suddenly and instinctively aware of some unusual sensation, they have looked up and found a friend's or a stranger's gaze fixed intently upon them. This fascination was described by Catherine of Medicis as that of the strong soul over the weak—an assertion which cannot be accepted without qualification, for the strongest mind can be affected by this mysterious agency as well as the weakest, if the sympathetic influences be favourable. This magnetic power or fascination—whichever it may be called—has not received the same attention from the bulk of mankind as the eye-power of hate, or the magnetism of repulsion. The glance that attracts has been accepted as we accept the sunlight or the flowers; but the glance that repels has passed into the domain of superstition. The glance of the good eye has been but little thought of except by lovers; but the glance of the evil eye, or that which is supposed to be evil, took possession of the minds of the multitude, and the belief in its effects has exercised a malign influence over the weak and credulous from the very earliest times, and among all the tribes and nations of the earth.

Everyone has heard of the three Gorgons of Greek mythology, and of Medusa, the best-known personage among them, the glance of whose eye had the power of turning into stone everyone upon whom it was directed. The name of the Gorgons, or Gorgones, usually supposed to be derived from the Greek word "gorgos," fierce, may be drawn, with more probability, from the mythology of the Egyptians and Phœnicians, from whom the Greeks borrowed so much. In that ancient speech, which lies at the root of all the Celtic languages of Europe, it signifies "the witch, or mad woman, with the evil eye;" from "Gorach," a mad woman, and "Gon," to hurt with the evil eye; whence "Gorach-gon," or "Gorgon," and "Goineideach," one bewitched, or Gorgonised.

There was lately disposed of at Messrs. Christie and Manson's, in the collection of the Duke of Marlborough, an antique gem,

with the head of Medusa, a drawing of which, greatly enlarged, was engraved for the second volume of the *Analysis of Ancient Mythology*, by Jacob Bryant (London, 1807). The ancient artist who cut this matchless gem caught the whole spirit of the fable, and represented in the awful countenance, with "the snakes in the wavy hair," the very ideal of all wickedness, horror, and despair, as if he had known—which he possibly did—that the ancient word, which the Greeks had softened into Medusa, was "Mi-dhocas-ach," despairing. Pliny speaks of "those among the Triballians and Illyrians, who with their very eyesight can kill those whom they look wistfully upon for any long time;" and Plutarch states on the authority of Philaretus that "the Thybiens who inhabited Pontus were deadly, not only to babes but to men grown, and that whomsoever their eye, speech, or breath would reach were sure to fall sick and pine away." It is known, he adds, in another passage, that "friends and servants have fascinating (or evil) eyes, and that there are even fathers to whose protracted gaze mothers will not expose their children." It was seldom that the superstition of early times invested men with the power of the Evil Eye. Just as in the mediæval ages and in the present day, wherever the idea of sorcery still lingers—a much larger space than is generally supposed—there are few wizards, but many witches. Occasionally, a man is supposed to possess the evil eye—the superstition is current in Italy with regard to Pope Pius the Ninth—but, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, the persons supposed to wield the power of inflicting death or calamity by a glance of the eye, are women, young or old. Popular superstition has generally divided them into two classes: those who involuntarily and innocently possess the fatal power, and are unconscious of its exercise; and those who knowingly acquired it by compact with the powers of darkness, and take a fiendish delight in exercising it against all who offend them. The maleficent power has been known by several English words. It is to "eye-bite," to "over-look," and to "take." The French and Italians simply call it fascination in the evil sense of the word; the Germans, the "scheelauge," or squint-eye, ascribing the power to a squint; and the "zauber-blick," or enchanted glance. To "take," in Shakespeare, means to blast or blight by witchcraft. In *King Lear*, Act II.,

Scene 4, occurs the imprecation, "Strike her young bones, you taking airs, with lameness!" He says of Herne the Hunter, in the *Merry Wives of Windsor*, that he

Blasts the tree, and takes the cattle,  
And makes milch kine yield blood.

In *Hamlet*, speaking of Christmas-time, he says:

The nights are wholesome; then no planets strike,  
No fairy takes, no witch hath power to charm,  
So hallowed and so gracious is the time.

Eye-biting is defined in *Nomenclator*, 1585, as "bewitching," "a disease where-with children waxe leane and pine away; the original whereof, they in olde time referred to the crooked and wrye lookes of envious and malicious people." In a work, called *Adey's Candle in the Dark*, quoted in *Nares's Glossary*, occurs the passage: "Master Scot, in his *Discoverie*, telleth us that our English people i' Ireland, whose posterity were lately barbarously cut off, were much given to this idolatry in the queene's time, insomuch that there being a disease among their cattle, that grew blinde, being a common disease in that country, they did commonly execute people for it, calling them eye-biting witches."

The Irish "eye-biters" used rhymes and imprecations to effect their purpose, like the witches in *Macbeth*; and, in Scot's *Discoverie of Witchcraft*, are said to have been able to rhyme either beast or man to death.

"Overlook" appears to be a word in use among the Irish. "A certain woman," says Mr. Graham Dalzell, in his *Darker Superstitions of Scotland*, "who was tried at Youghal, in Ireland, in the year 1661, for bewitching Mary Langden, denied the fact, though admitting that she might have 'overlooked' her. Between these, she said, there was a great difference, for, unless by touching her, she could not have done her any harm;" whereupon Glanvil (*The Discovery of Witchcraft*) says, "How 'overlooking' and 'bewitching' are distinguished by this fraternity I know not."

"Overlook," in the Irish sense, is still used, as appears from a newspaper paragraph in June of the present year (1875), which states that an Irish woman, named Rafferty, was charged at the police-court in Liverpool with assaulting another woman, named Burke. Mrs. Rafferty, being much annoyed by a report which, she alleged, had been circulated by Mrs. Burke, that Mrs. Rafferty had an "evil eye" and had "over-

looked" a child, showed her displeasure at this calumny by throwing a stone at Mrs. Burke, which struck her in the face and inflicted a severe wound. In reply to an inquiry by the magistrate, Mrs. Rafferty explained that by "overlooking" a child was meant the killing of the infant by looking at it, and at the same time wishing it dead.

According to the ancient, but by no means exploded, superstition, which was as common to Egypt, Phœnicia, Greece, and Rome, as to the natives of modern Europe, Asia, Africa, and even to the aboriginal tribes of North and South America, there was no limit to the mischief that could be inflicted by the malevolent owner of the evil eye. He or she could inflict death or any form of disease; could prevent marriages; could lay waste the possessions of the husbandman, and blight the corn and the vine; could destroy cattle, render cows and ewes barren; turn milk to blood; cover the body with sores and ulcers, and bring down any imaginable calamity. In the trial of Janet Irving for witchcraft in 1616, it was deposed that Satan himself taught her "that if she bore ill-will to anybody, she was to look upon them with (wide) opened eyes, and pray evil for them in his name, when she would get her heart's desire." In France, Italy, and Spain, as well as in the British Isles, and possibly all over Europe, there are at this day mendicants supposed to possess the evil eye, to whom it is considered highly dangerous to refuse alms, and who, in consequence, carry on a more profitable trade than their brethren. "In various quarters," says Mr. Graham Dalzell, "ready acquiescence yet attends the importunity of the mendicant, from dreading the consequences of refusal; and should an uncouth aspect and demeanour be conjoined with his vocation, objects of interest and affection are carefully withdrawn from his gaze. Children are thought the most susceptible of injury."

A peculiar form of this ghastly superstition was, that the praise of a person with the evil eye was considered as deadly as his curse. Zallony, in his *Eastern Travels*, 1835, describes the terror that takes possession of the Greeks, Turks, and Jews of the Grecian Archipelago, when any one praises the health, beauty, or goodness of their wives or children, lest the utterer of the praise should possess the evil eye. "God preserve it!" is the immediate ejaculation, which is thought to ward off

all possible evil; and sometimes, if the danger is thought to be more than usually imminent, the affrighted person puts his or her finger in the mouth to moisten it with saliva, and makes the sign of the cross upon the forehead of the beloved object who is threatened with evil. In Scotland the believers in the evil eye did not like their children or their cattle to be praised. Such commendation was only to be counteracted by a pious invocation to Heaven to avert the evil, and by spitting. "If evil followed the praise of a horse," says Mr. Dalzell, "the Lord's Prayer was whispered in the animal's ear; and old women were invited to restore the health of fascinated horses by their prayers."

The cockatrice, or basilisk—an imaginary creature, with the body of a serpent and the head of a cock—was supposed to have so deadly an eye as to kill by its look. Shakespeare makes Romeo speak of the "death-darting eye of cockatrice;" and in *Twelfth Night* Sir Toby Belch says, "This will so fright them, that they will kill by the look like cockatrices." The word was afterwards applied to women who allured men to destruction by their heartless extravagance; in which sense it is used by Ben Jonson and other writers of his time, and is personified in the "Fair Serpent" by a poet of our own day:

Many a noble bosom  
Has that scaly serpent stung,  
With the darting of its eye-light  
And the witchery of its tongue.  
And to feed it and amuse it,  
And pamper its greedy maw,  
Many a goodly heirship  
Has gone like the ice in thaw.

The supposed liability of the innocent multitude to the malevolence of the evil eye caused the superstitious to have recourse to many charms, incantations, and ceremonies to avert ill consequences and render the poisoned glance innocuous; among which, as just recorded, prayer and the use of saliva were conspicuous. The wearing of coral brooches, beads, and earrings is still a popular charm in Naples against the evil eye. "In Scotland," says Mr. Graham Dalzell, in his *Addenda*, "a red thread tied about a child's neck, or a rowan cross (cross of mountain ash), are believed to be equally efficacious in preventing the influence of evil spirits, evil eyes, and other calamities." In the middle ages, an amulet, of a lozenge shape, marked with the mystic letters A B R A C A D A B R A, was worn in the bosom as a certain specific. A cross



formed of the wood of the elder-tree, affixed to cow-houses and stables, was supposed to protect the cattle from all possible harm. A branch of the rowan-tree was also in great favour, and to hold up but a branch or twig, in presence of an eye-biter, was sufficient to render her deadliest wishes of no avail. A four-leaved shamrock, which is excessively rare, and all the more highly prized for that reason, was a sovereign antidote. In Pocock's *Travels in the East*, he says that the Arabs of Egypt threw salt into the fire as a charm against the effects of an evil eye, or before loading their camels for a journey through the Desert, concluding, as the blue flame arises, that every evil genius is banished. The ejection of saliva was also considered a charm of peculiar efficacy. Pliny speaks of it as a certain antidote to "fascination," as well as a preservative from contagion, and in pugilistic encounters as certain to aggravate the violence of a blow. "At the present day, as of old," says Mr. Dalzell, "a Greek mother, as if commemorating the words of Theocritus and Tibullus, spits in her bosom to repel fascinating glances directed towards herself, and, dreading the gaze of the sterile on her child, spits in its face." But the most common of all the charms in use against the evil eye is that very vulgar gesture of applying the thumb to the nose, stretching out the fingers, and "twiddling" them with a rapid motion for a few seconds, commonly practised by London street-boys, without the slightest knowledge of its origin or meaning, and known in slang parlance as "taking a sight." The *Slang Dictionary* says that "to take a sight" is a vulgar action employed by boys and others to denote incredulity or contempt for authority; but the real meaning in ancient times, forgotten and wholly unsuspected in our own, was to show contempt and defiance of the machinations of witchcraft, and to render the evil eye powerless. This is the action that so offends the good-natured Pio Nono, not for itself, but as a manifestation of the public opinion, that he possesses, independently of his will, a power that he would be the last to exercise designedly. This vulgar sign, modern as it looks, is as old as Egyptian civilisation, and was known, as tracings upon the unearthed walls of Pompeii and Herculaneum abundantly prove, to the streetboys and other vulgar inhabitants of those ancient cities.

In hitherto unsuspected connection with this subject there occurs a word

in Boccaccio, and afterwards in Milton, which shows the mysterious terror associated with the evil eye. The word is "Demogorgon," used by Boccaccio in his *Genealogy of the Gods*, and called by Dr. Bentley "a silly word," invented by that author. But this, according to Nares's *Glossary*, was an error, as it was mentioned by Lutatius or Lactantius Placidus, the scholiast on Statius. It was supposed to be derived from *Demi-urgus*, and drawn from the oriental system of magic. Milton uses the word in the second book of *Paradise Lost*:

With him enthroned  
Sat sable-vested Night, eldest of things,  
The consort of his reign; and by them stood  
Orus and Hades, and the dreaded name  
Of Demogorgon.

Spenser, in the *Faerie Queen*, says of Night:

Thou wast begot in Demogorgon's Hall,  
And saw'st the secrets of the world unrolled.

Ben Jonson, unaware of its earlier origin, in the *Alchemist* speaks:

Boccace's Demogorgon, thousands more,  
All abstract riddles of our store.

Tasso alludes to the awful name without mentioning it. This so much dreaded word, erroneously supposed to be derived from "demon" and the Greek "gorgos"—fierce, or fearful—was not known to the Greeks or Romans, but is a relic of the Celtic period in Europe, and a corruption of the Celtic or Gaelic words "Dion-mi-gorach-gon"—"Defend me [from] the witch with the evil eye." The original meaning had been lost in the middle ages; and on the principle of "*Omne ignotum pro magnifico*," the word was held to be something peculiarly solemn, mysterious, and awful. Such it doubtless appeared to Boccaccio and Tasso, to Spenser, and to Milton, and thus served the purposes of poetry when it had been lost to popular comprehension. It has now quite disappeared, though, unfortunately, the superstition which gave rise to it still remains to exert its baleful influence over the minds of the ignorant and credulous, as well as over the minds of many men and women of education and refinement who have not been able to emancipate themselves entirely from the thralldom of the supernatural, but allow the supposed influences of the unseen and unknown world of demons and spirits to influence the convictions which they have not the courage to avow, and the fears which they are wise enough to confine to the secrecy of their own bosoms.

## A CHARMING FELLOW.

BY FRANCES ELEANOR TROLLOPE.

AUTHOR OF "AUNT MARGARET'S TROUBLE," "MABEL'S PROGRESS," &c. &c.

### CHAPTER XXXVI.

MINNIE BODKIN had not dismissed from her mind the rumours about Algernon Errington, which she had heard from the widow Thimbleby. After some consideration she resolved to speak to him directly on the subject, and decided on the manner of doing so.

"I will not try to speak to him in the presence of other people," she thought. "He would wriggle off and slip through my fingers, if he found the conversation had any tendency to become disagreeable. And then, too, it might be difficult to speak to him without interruption."

This latter consideration had reference to Minnie's observation of Mrs. Algernon, who never saw her husband engaged in conversation with Miss Bodkin without uncereimoniously thrusting herself between them.

The result of Minnie's deliberations was the sending of the following note to the Whitford Post-office:—

"MY DEAR ALGERNON,—I want to say a word to you quietly. Can you come to me on your way home this afternoon? I will be ready to receive you at any hour between four and six. Don't disappoint your old friend,  
M. B."

At a few minutes before five that evening Mr. Ancram Errington presented himself at Dr. Bodkin's house, and was shown up to Minnie's room.

It was one of Minnie's good days. She was seated in her lounging-chair by the fire, but she was not altogether reclining in it—merely leaning a little back against the cushions. A small writing-table stood in front of her. It was covered with papers—amongst them a copy of the local newspaper—and she had evidently been busily occupied. When Algernon entered she held out her hand with a smile of welcome. "This is very good!" she exclaimed. "I was not sure that I should succeed in tearing your postmastership away from the multifarious duties—"

Algernon winced, and held up his hand. "Don't, Minnie!" he cried. "For mercy's sake, let me forget all that for half an hour!"

"Oh, reassure yourself, most overworked of public servants! It is not about the conveyance of his Majesty's mails that I am going to talk to you."

"Upon my word, I am infinitely relieved to hear it."

And indeed his countenance brightened at once, and he took a chair opposite to Minnie with all his old nonchalant gaiety.

"How you hate your office!" said Minnie, looking at him curiously. "More, even, than your native laziness—which I know to be considerable—would seem to account for."

"Not at all! There is no difficulty in accounting for my distaste for the whole business. There can be no difficulty. It is the simplest, most obvious thing in the world!"

"Don't things go smoothly? Have you any special troubles or difficulties in the office, Algernon?"

"Special troubles! My dear Minnie, what on earth are you driving at?"

"I am 'driving' at nothing more than the simple sense of my words implies," she answered, with a marked shade of surprise in her countenance. "I mean just what I say. Is your work going pretty smoothly? Have you any complaints? Does your clerk do well?"

"Oh, Gibbs? Capitally, capitally! Old Obadiah is a first-rate fellow. Did you know his name was Obadiah? Absurd name, isn't it? Oh yes; he's all right. I trust him entirely—blindly. He has the whole thing in his hands. He might do anything he liked in the office. I have every confidence in Gibbs. But now, Minnie, let us have done with the subject. If you had as much of it as I have you would understand—Come, dismiss the bugaboo, or I shall think you have entrapped me here to talk to me about the post-office. And I warn you I don't think I should be able to stand that, even from you!"

"How absurdly you are exaggerating, Algy," said Minnie, shaking her head at him, and yet smiling a little at the same time. "But be at peace. I have nothing to say on the subject of the Whitford post-office. My discourse will chiefly concern the Whitford postmaster, and—No! Don't be so ridiculous! not in his official capacity, either!"

"Oh! Well, in his private character, I should think it impossible to find a more delightful topic of conversation, than that interesting and accomplished individual," returned Errington, laughing and settling himself comfortably in his chair.

"I hope it may prove so. Tell me, first, how is Mrs. Algernon Ancram Errington?"

"Why, Castalia is not very well, I think, although I don't know what is the matter. She grows thinner and thinner, and sallow and sallower. Entre nous, Minnie, she frets and chafes against our life here. She has not the gift of looking on the bright side of things. She is rather peevish by nature. It's a little trying sometimes, coming on the back of all the other botherations. Ha! There!" (passing his hand quickly across his forehead) "let us say no more on that subject, either. And now to return to the interesting topic—the delightful and accomplished—eh? What have you to say to me?"

Minnie seized on the opportunity, which chance had afforded her, to introduce the matter she wished to speak about.

"Do you think your wife is annoyed by the importunities of tradespeople, Algy? That would be enough to fret her and sour her temper."

"Importunities of tradespeople? Good gracious, no! And, besides, I don't think Castalia would allow the importunities of tradespeople to disturb her much. I should fancy that a Bourbon princess could scarcely look on such folks from a more magnificent elevation than poor Castalia does. But, *Que voulez-vous?* She was brought up in that sort of hauteur."

"I quite believe in your wife's disregard for the feelings of the tradespeople," answered Minnie, drily. "But this is not a question of her own feelings, you see. Come, Algernon, may I take the privilege of our old friendship, and speak to you quite frankly?"

"Pray do, my dear Minnie. You know I always loved frankness."

He looked the picture of candour as he turned his bright blue eyes on his friend.

"Well then, to begin with a question. Do you not owe money to several persons in Whitford?"

"My dear Minnie, don't look so solemn, for mercy's sake! 'Owe money!' why I suppose everybody owes money. A few pounds would cover all my debts. I assure you I am never troubled on the subject."

"I am glad to hear it. But—will you forgive the liberty I am taking for the sake of my motive, and give me *carte blanche* to be as impertinent as I please?"

"With all my heart!" he answered unhesitatingly.

"Thanks, Algy. Then, to proceed without circumlocution: I am afraid that, since

neither you nor your wife are accustomed to domestic economy, you may possibly be spending more money than is quite prudent, without being aware of it. You say you are not disturbed by your debts; but, Algy, I hear things on this subject which are never likely to reach your ears; or, at all events, not until it is too late for the knowledge of them to serve you. And I have reason to think that there is a good deal of unpleasant feeling among the Whitford tradespeople about you and yours."

"You will excuse me for observing that the Whitford tradespeople always have been, within my recollection, a set of pig-headed, prejudiced ignoramuses, and that I see no reason to apprehend any speedy improvement in the intelligence of that highly respectable body."

"Don't laugh, Algernon. The matter is serious. You have not been troubled yet, you say. But the trouble may begin at any moment, and I should wish you to be prepared to meet it. You may have bills sent in which——"

"Bills? Oh, as to that, there's no lack of them already! I must acknowledge the great alacrity and punctuality with which the mercantile classes of this town send in their weekly accounts. Oh dear yes, I have a considerable collection of those interesting documents; so many, in fact, that the other day, when Castalia was complaining of the shabbiness of the paper-hangings in our dining-room, I proposed to her to cover the walls with the tradesmen's bills. It would be novel, economical, and moral; a kind of memento mori—a death's head at the feast! Fancy seeing your butcher's bill glaring down above the roast mutton every day, and the green-grocer's 'to account delivered,' restraining the spoon, that might otherwise too lavishly dispense the contents of the vegetable dishes!"

"Algy, Algy!"

"Upon my honour, Minnie, I made the suggestion. But Castalia looked as grave as a judge. She didn't see it at all. The fact is, poor Cassy's sense of humour is merely rudimentary."

Minnie joined her hands together on the table, and thus supported, she leant a little forward, and looked searchingly at the young man.

"Algernon," she said with slow deliberation, "I begin to be afraid that the case is worse than I thought."

"What do you mean?" he asked,



almost roughly, and with a sudden change of colour.

"I mean that you really are in difficult waters. How has it come to pass that the weekly accounts have accumulated in this way?"

He laughed a little forced laugh, but he looked relieved, too.

"The process is simple. They keep sending 'em in!"

"And then it is said—forgive me if I appear intrusive—that you gave orders for wine and such things out of Whitford. And that does not incline the people of the place to be patient."

"Well, by Jove!" exclaimed Algernon, throwing himself back in his chair and thrusting his hands into his pockets, "that is the most absurd—the most irrational—the most preposterous reason for being angry with me! They grumble when I run up a bill with them, and they are affronted when I don't!"

"Does your wife understand—or—control the household expenditure?"

"Bless you, no! She has not the very vaguest ideas of anything of the kind. When she had an allowance from her uncle for her dress, my lord used to have to come down every now and then with a supplementary sum of money to get her out of debt."

He spoke with an air of perfectly easy amusement, and without a trace of anxiety; unless, perhaps, an accustomed ear might have detected some constraint in his voice.

"But could she not be made to understand? Why not give her some hints on domestic economy? It should be done kindly, of course. And surely her own good sense—"

Algernon pursed up his mouth and raised his eyebrows.

"She considers herself an unexampled victim as it is. I think 'lessons on domestic economy' would about put the finishing stroke to the internal felicity of Ivy Lodge!"

Minnie looked pained. They were trenching here on ground on which she had no intention of venturing farther. It formed no part of her plan to be drawn into a discussion respecting the defects and shortcomings of Algernon's wife. She was silent.

Algernon got up from his chair, and came and stood before Minnie, taking both her hands in his.

"My dear girl," he said, "I cannot tell you how much I feel your kindness and

friendship. But, now, pray don't look so terribly like the tragic muse! I assure you there is no need, as far as we are concerned. Castalia is perhaps a little extravagant; but, after all, what does it amount to? A few pounds would cover all I owe. The whole of our budget is a mere bagatelle. The fact is, you have attached too much importance to the chatter of these thick-headed boobies. They hate us, I suppose, because Castalia's uncle is a peer of the realm, and because we dine late, or for some equally excellent and conclusive reasons."

"I don't know that they hate you, Algy," returned Minnie, but not with an air of very perfect conviction. "And, after all, it is scarcely a proof of personal malignity to wish to be paid one's bill!"

Algernon laughed quite genuinely. "Oh yes it is!" he cried. "A proof of the direst malignity. What worse can they do?"

"Well, Algernon, I cannot presume to push my sermonisings any farther. You will give me credit at least for having ventured to make them from a single-minded wish to be of some service to you."

"My dear Minnie! you are the 'best fellow' in the world! You remember I used to call you so in my saucy, schoolboy days, and when your majesty condescended to permit my impertinences? And to show you how thoroughly I appreciate your friendship, I don't mind telling you that when I am removed from this delightful berth that I now occupy, I shall have to get Uncle Seely to help us out a little. But I feel no scruple about that. Something is due to me. I ought never to have been placed here at all. Well, no matter! It was a mistake. My lord sees it now, and he is setting to work in earnest for me in other quarters. I have every reason to believe that I shall get very pretty promotion before long. It isn't my business to go about proclaiming this to the butchers and bakers, is it? And between you and me, Miss Bodkin, your dear Whitfordians are as great rogues as the tradesmen in town, and vastly less pleasant to deal with. They make us pay an enormous percentage for the trifling credit we take. So let 'em wait and be—paid! Dear Minnie, I assure you I shall not forget your affectionate kindness."

He bent down over her as he said the last words, still holding her hands. A change in Minnie's face made him look round, and when he did so, he saw his wife standing just within the room behind him.

Minnie was inexpressibly vexed with herself to feel a hot flush covering her face. She knew it would be misconstrued, and that made her colour the more. Mrs. Algernon Errington was the first to speak.

"I beg your pardon, Miss Bodkin," she said; "I didn't know that you were so particularly engaged."

"What the deuce brought you here?" asked her husband, with a not altogether successful assumption of thinking the whole trio, including himself, completely at their ease.

"There was no one in the drawing-room nor in the study," continued Castalia, still addressing Minnie, "so I thought I would come direct to your room. I see now that I ought not to have taken that liberty."

"Well, frankly, I don't think you ought, my dear," said her husband, lightly.

Minnie was sorely tempted to say so too. But she felt that any show of anger on her part would but increase the unpleasantness of the situation, and a quarrel with Algernon's wife under such circumstances would have been equally revolting to her pride and her taste; so she held out her hand to Castalia with grave courtesy, and said, "I have to apologise, on my side, for having taken the privilege of old friendship to sermonise your husband a little. He will tell you what I have ventured to speak to him about. I hope you will forgive me."

Castalia appeared not to see the proffered hand. She stood quite still near the door as she answered, "Oh, I daresay it is all quite right. I don't suppose Ancram will tell me anything about it; I am not in his secrets."

"This is no secret, Mrs. Errington; at all events, not from you."

"Oh, I don't know. But I daresay it doesn't matter."

Through all the languid insolence of her manner there was discernible so much real pain of mind, that Minnie once more checked a severe speech, and answered gently, "You will judge of that. Of course Algernon will discuss the subject of our conversation with you."

Mrs. Algernon Errington scarcely condescended to return Minnie's parting salutation, but walked away, saying to her husband over her shoulder, "I am going

to drive home. It is nearly dinner-time. I suppose you are coming? But don't let me interfere with your arrangements."

"Interfere with a fiddlestick!" cried Algernon, in the quick, testy tone that was the nearest approach to loss of temper Minnie had ever seen in him. Then he added after an instant, with a short laugh, "I don't know why I'm supposed not to include dinner in my 'arrangements' to-day of all days in the year!"

And then the husband and wife went away together, and entered the fly that awaited them before Dr. Bodkin's door.

"How did you know where to find me?" asked Algernon, suddenly, after a silent drive of some ten minutes.

"Oh, I knew you had a rendezvous."

"I had no 'rendezvous.' You could not know it!"

"Couldn't I? I tell you I saw that creature's letter. 'Dear Algernon!' What right has she to write to you like that?"

And Castalia burst into angry tears.

Algernon turned upon her eagerly.

"Saw her letter? Where? How?"

"I—they told me—it was at the office."

"You went to the office? And you saw Minnie's letter?"

"I—it's no use scolding me, or pretending to be injured. I know who is injured of us two."

"I suppose I must have left the note lying open on the table of my private office," said Algernon, speaking very distinctly, and not looking at his wife.

"Yes; that must be it! I—I—I tore it up. You will find the fragments on the floor, if you think them worth preserving."

"What a goose you are, Castalia!" exclaimed her husband, leaning back in the carriage and closing his eyes.

Now the fact was, that Algernon distinctly remembered having placed Minnie's note in a drawer of a little secretaire which he kept habitually locked, and of which the key was at that moment in his waistcoat pocket. And the discovery that his wife had in some way or other obtained access to the said secretaire gave him, for reasons known only to himself, abundant food for conjecture and reflection during the rest of the drive home.